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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam
(As of 5:30 P.M. EST)

1. A meeting at the Buddhist Institute in Saigon this evening culminated in a somewhat disorderly demonstration through the capital. The meeting itself heard a comparatively restrained address by an Institute official, who cautioned a gathering of about 5,000 persons to return home and not to demonstrate. However, in an apparently prepared move, about 2,000 youths--100 of them reportedly armed with sticks and staves--began an orderly march into the city, carrying banners critical of the government, and of the US, but in generally mild tones. Press reports indicate that the crowd became somewhat hostile, roughing up at least one American believed to be a correspondent, and shouting "Americans, go home."

According to the US Embassy, the marchers descended on the Saigon radio station, which was guarded by a normal complement of one police company. Both Captial Military Region commander General Khang and the mayor of Saigon arrived to try to disperse the crowd, which eventually dwindled to about 400 who succeeded in penetrating the barbed wire surrounding the radio compound. This crowd finally broke up after combat police charged with tear gas. Some arrests were made.

2. About 5,000 government personnel--including 1,000 national police, 1,000 civil servants, and 3,000 army and popular force troops--marched in Hue this morning in opposition to the Ky-Thieu government. The parade was led by a government information service sound truck, the ARVN First Division band, military

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and police officers, and the deputy province chief for administration. This show of force--in direct defiance of disciplinary orders issued this week--included personnel from the ARVN First Division headquarters. A US military adviser reported that the division headquarters was virtually deserted this morning.

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3. I Corps commander General Chuan recently told US officials that there is a significant difference in the degree of popular support in Hue and Da Nang for the antigovernment movement. Chuan feels that a majority of the people in Hue probably support the movement because of the very strong Buddhist influence there. In Da Nang, however, he claims that even the Buddhist faithful are divided, while merchants and other groups oppose the movement because of economic dislocations. In light of this assessment, the government might find it more feasible to restore its authority first in Da Nang, where such a move might receive more popular support.

4. Directorate Secretary-General Chieu and National Police Director Lieu left Hue for Saigon this afternoon (Saigon time), apparently without accomplishing their mission of convincing General Thi to leave I Corps. Thi and First Division commander General Nhuan were at the airport to see them off. After his arrival in Saigon, Chieu told newsmen that he had not been held in Hue against his will at any time.

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5. Thich Thien Minh, a prominent member of the Buddhist Institute and a strong follower of Tri Quang, indicated today to an Embassy officer that agitation would continue until the Buddhist demands are met, although he stated that Buddhist leaders would use their influence to prevent violence. Minh described basic Buddhist demands as either an elected constitution assembly or one entirely drawn from the elected provincial and municipal councils. He declared that Buddhists

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placed no faith in promises by General Thieu and felt that Premier Ky had no control over other generals. Minh also implied that anti-American overtones would cease if the US would in effect make it clear that it supports the Buddhists rather than the government's approach.

6. One member of a "struggle" group in I Corps allegedly has stated that the real aim of the protest is to bring about a neutralist regime along the lines espoused by French president DeGaulle. Two labor leaders from Quang Tin Province, who arrived in Saigon, stated that they were convinced that the Viet Cong were in the vicinity of the province capital, waiting for an opportunity to infiltrate "legally" and take control of the "struggle" movement. A Vietnamese report on activities of the Viet Cong "Liberation Students' Association" in the Da Nang area indicates that they may have been responsible for some of the more provocative banners and leaflets appearing in the city.

7. Saigon newspapers today began publishing accounts of demonstrations and the demands of the agitators in the northern provinces for the first time. The government's decision to relax its censorship was made at a meeting between Ky and his cabinet on 31 March, after having been proposed by Minister of Information Dinh Trinh Chinh. Several Saigon publishers had evidently complained about censorship restrictions to the government last week.

8. In light of a recent conversation with Information Minister Chinh, US Embassy officials feel that there is little chance of the government's putting into effect its plan to conduct a major propaganda campaign in I Corps to help restore government control there. Chinh clearly indicated his opinion that an effective information program would have to wait until after government authority had been established. He was also critical of the timing of Premier Ky's dismissal of General Thi, and of Ky's failure to seek the advice of the cabinet on subsequent developments.

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